

Delivery of the National Fire Plan in Idaho

Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Progress Update February 26, 2002



Idaho Department of Lands USDA Forest Service Idaho Department of Commerce

This brief is intended to convey the progress of inter-related activities of the Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Commerce and Forest Service with regard to the hazardous fuels reduction portion of the National Fire Plan in Idaho. The monies and project progress discussed in this brief refer to FY 01. A list of the five projects selected for funding in Idaho for FY02 through the Western State Fire Managers competitive process are included.

Community Assistance Programs administered by the Idaho Department of Lands in Cooperation with the Forest Service

State Fire Assistance (SFA) - Approximately \$2,184,000 was granted to the State to increase the readiness level of the state firefighting organizations. Of the 2001 funding, \$1.9 million was dedicated to Wildland Urban Interface projects and development of defensible space. These monies were allocated on a competitive basis across the seventeen western states. Grant awards were determined by the Council of Western State Foresters. Cost share: 50% Federal to 50% non-federal.

The four large community projects selected for hazardous fuels reduction in Idaho for FY 01 include:

- Dixie
- Yellow Pine
- Island Park
- Hope

Progress Report of the Idaho Department of Lands and National Forests adjacent to Communities at Risk

DIXIE

Idaho Department of Lands: Dixie is a very small, isolated, and closely knit community, resulting in a high degree of participation. 54 residents have currently signed up for the hazardous fuels incentives program and will complete treatment of 54 acres on private lands.

Nez Perce National Forest: The Red River District is spearheading the treatment of 90 additional National Forest acres immediately adjacent to private lands. Treatment is focused on thinning canopies of lodgepole pine and hand piling ground fuels for burning

in the fall. Completed treatment will reduce the risk of fire from entering the community. Approximately 35 acres have been completed to date with final treatments to be completed by fall of 2002.

YELLOW PINE

Idaho Department of Lands:

Yellow Pine is a small, isolated community that has historically seen plenty of wildfire activity nearby and is aware of the future potential threat. A very large percent of the critical private acreage surrounding the town intends to participate in the incentives program. At this time, 44 residents have signed up for the incentives program and 16 have completed work.

Boise National Forest:

Since 1998 the Cascade Ranger District of the Boise National Forest has implemented four projects immediately adjacent to the southern city limits of the community of Yellow Pine. Project activities included thinning of small diameter trees (8" and less), pruning of larger trees, hand piling of thinned material as well as downed woody material, pile burning and broadcast burning. 98 acres have been completed as of November 2001. An additional project is in the planning stage to further treat an additional 98 acres of Boise National Forest lands immediately to the south and east of the community. The planning of this project will be a joint effort between the Payette National Forest and the Boise National Forest. Thinning, pruning, and hand piling will again be the focus of this project, with implementation planned for the summer of 2002.

Payette National Forest:

The Payette National Forest is planning three projects on the Krassel Ranger District to reduce hazardous fuels adjacent to the Yellow Pine town site. Both of these National Fire Plan projects are being designed to enhance and match efforts made within the community to reduce fire risk. The Yellow Pine Thinning project will reduce understory trees and stand density to minimize the threat of crown fire in an area immediately adjacent to private land. The thinning area will provide a shaded fuel break around the north and west edge of town. The completion date for Categorical Exclusion will be April 2002 and work could begin as soon as summer 2002. The Park/Eiugren prescribed burn is planned for an area north and west of Yellow Pine. The burn will border the Yellow Pine Thinning project to provide an additional buffer to protect the town site as well as reintroducing fire to the ecosystem. The objective of the burn is to reduce surface fuel accumulations and thin the encroaching shade tolerant understory on 4500 acres. The Categorical Exclusion will be completed April 2002 and the first phase of burning may occur as early as late April 2002.

Payette and Boise National Forests:

The Greater Yellow Pine Protection Project will be a joint project between the Boise and Payette National Forests designed to treat the surrounding areas with a variety of methods such as prescribed burning, thinning and harvest to reduce fire threat and restore the forests to a more natural condition. The project EIS will be initiated in one or two years with project implementation tentatively planned for five to seven years from now.

ISLAND PARK:

Idaho Department of Lands:

The Island Park area has a large population within fragmented subdivisions surrounded by National Forest. There is a high degree of absentee ownership and a relatively short operating season in this highly fire-prone ecosystem. Participation in the hazardous fuels incentive program has been slow to develop. If local residents take advantage of the hazardous fuels reduction incentives program, eventually these treatments could be very effective due to the blocked-up nature of the ownerships. Currently, there are no completed treatments on private lands.

Caribou-Targhee National Forest:

The Island Park area is made up of several dispersed community facilities and subdivisions. It is about 30 miles long between Harriman State Park and the Idaho-Montana border and subdivisions finger out from the main highway about 20 miles wide. The area is forested and is about 98% lodgepole Pine. Within this 30 by 20 mile area there are 110 subdivisions and about 4000 landowners, many of whom are absent.

The Forest Service participated last fall in the assessments on private land and land owners have been thinning to reduce crown closure, brush, and dead and down fuels on their lands. The Forest Service has provided dumpsites for this slash, which has been burned.

The Forest Service is currently in the process of scoping for a NEPA document to do thinning and pruning on National Forest System lands along a 300 to 500 foot swath adjacent to participating land owners.

HOPE

Idaho Department of Lands:

A very large population of people lives throughout this area near Hope. Dwellings are scattered, with a large percentage of recreational, absentee ownerships. The climate results in very dense mixed conifer/hardwood growth. Aesthetics (lush views of the lake/mountains) are a major concern for many residents. Participation in the program has been slow to build, with only 8 residents currently participating in the incentives program

for a total of 81 acres. It is believed that participation will likely increase as some properties are accomplished and the results are appreciated/accepted by those who were previously reluctant.

Last summer, the Idaho Department of Lands Pend Oreille Area and the Sandpoint Ranger District held a "Fire Fair" to inform the public of the hazardous fuels incentives program and the proposed project adjacent to the private lands on the National Forest called the Rising Cougar project. This event was an open house near the project area to begin making personal contacts with landowners and educating them about the project and fire issues (urban interface hazardous fuels issues).

Idaho Panhandle National Forests:

The Rising Cougar Project is located north of Lake Pend Oreille above Highway 200 from near Hope east to the Montana state line.

All of the landlines have been surveyed and posted. The Ranger District has hired a contractor to move forward the land exchanges and easements necessary for the success of the project. The purpose is to make the post sale prescribed burning easier, safer and more successful than previously experienced in this area due to poor access. Currently, there are no access points available for helicopter landings and log haul. The project area on the National Forest is cut off from the county roads by private ownership. The contractor and local employees are making many contacts with the adjacent landowners.

A formal proposed action has not yet been generated, but will be completed soon, with the aid of the public. With such limited (no) access to the area, a good proposal with so many unknowns takes significant time. With the current progress, it is estimated that a strong proposed action and Notice of Intent will be generated by August 2002. The District Ranger has been making numerous contacts with other agency folks and with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to look for alternative sources for land exchange and/or land purchase.

The target date for a Draft EIS decision is August 2003. The anticipated sell date for any timber related projects are now scheduled for 2005 and 2006 (multiple sales). Hazardous fuels treatment on a large scale would occur post sale.

Community and Private Land Fire Assistance – Includes:

Hazardous Fuels Mitigation – Approximately \$390,000 supports a grant to the State Forester to: (a) reduce hazardous fuels accumulations and develop defensible space for improved fire protection in high risk areas most impacted by the 2000 fire season, (b) increase incentives for communities and private landowners to address defensible space and fuels management needs on municipal and private property, (c) expand outreach and education to homeowners and communities about fire prevention through the use of programs such as Firewise. Cost share: 50% federal to 50% non-federal.

The City of Post Falls, Department of Parks has received a grant from this program to reduce hazardous fuels accumulations within the city park system. Once completed, the project will also serve as a demonstration area for other communities and homeowners. The balance of money in this program has not been awarded. However, applications are still being accepted and considered.

Multi-resource Stewardship – Approximately \$645,000 supports a grant to the State Forester to enhance multi-resource stewardship planning and implementation to ensure effective fire protection treatments in the wildland-urban interface (where humans and their development meet or intermix with wildland fuels). \$378,000 of the funds will be cost share focused on hazardous fuel treatment or watershed restoration. Cost share: Rate will be 75% federal to 25% non-federal.

Idaho finally received authority in late January 2002 to process project applications (from landowners who are Forest Stewards) through the USDA-FSA offices. The Idaho Forest Stewardship Committee met to advise the State Forester on implementation of the MRS program. Sign-ups will begin this spring.

The Idaho Department of Lands has established the Idaho National Fire Plan Working Group. Its primary purpose is to deliver National Fire Plan programs through coordination with a number of local agency partners and federal partners such as the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior.

Program Managers for Idaho Department of Lands are located at the following address and phone number:

Idaho Department of Lands
3780 Industrial Avenue, South
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815-8918
(208) 769-1525

FY02
State of Idaho
Projects selected for funding by the Western State Fire Managers
Competitive funding process

- Student Conservation Association Corps: (\$720 M)
- Community Green Belt Demonstration Project (\$300 M)
- Kootenai/Shoshone Counties Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects (\$2.5 MM)
- 35 Fire Interface Workshops (\$60 M)

- Timberlake Fire Protection District Interface Workshops (\$2 K)

Detailed project descriptions may be viewed at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sfa_grants/sfa_grants.html

**Community Assistance Programs administered by the
Idaho Department of Commerce in Cooperation with the Forest Service**

The following programs are intended to enhance community capacity to reduce wildfire risk and expand local economic opportunities on private, state and tribal lands through federal: non-federal cost-shares.

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Fire Plan Grants
2001-2002

Funds Available FY01:

Bob Ford
As of 2-07-02

Planning	\$275,000
Economic Action Program (EAP)	\$120,000
EAP Pilot	\$600,000

Community	Status	\$ Amount	Type	Project
Cascade	Funded	24,836	EAP Pilot	ELWd Project
Latah County	Funded	7,000	Planning	Fire Planning
Custer County	Funded	35,000	Planning	Rural Addressing
Nez Perce County	Funded	20,000	Planning	Fire Planning
Adams County	Funded	25,000	Planning	Implementation
Gem County	Pending	47,500	EAP Pilot	Small Wood Study
Bannock County	Funded	48,600	Planning	2 Counties-planning
Shoshone County	Funded	40,000	Planning	Fire Planning
Funded and Pending Total		\$ 247,936		
Other Potential Projects				
Clearwater County	Deferred	25,000	Planning	Implementation
Bonner County	No application	35,000	EAP Pilot	Cedar Ornamentals
Konkolville	No application	50,000	EAP Pilot	Fuel/Small Wood
Kootenai County	No application	25,000	Planning	Fire Planning
Valley County	Deferred	40,000	EAP Pilot	Biomass Study
Weippe	No application	25,000	EAP Pilot	Wood Product
Grangeville	No application	50,000	EAP Pilot	Wood Product

Application Process: Administered through the Idaho Department of Commerce in cooperation with USFS Idaho Forest Supervisors Offices and the Idaho Department of Lands. Project applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis starting May 25, 2001. All funding will be made to or through cities and counties or their non-profit designates. Funding will be made available to projects best meeting the program guidelines. Submit brief project concept descriptions to Bob Ford, Idaho Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, Idaho 83720-0093, phone (208) 334-2470 or e-mail rford@idoc.state.id.us